

# **J.R. Goodwin and Kenneth Hagin Sr.**

by Mel C. Montgomery

Those who study the origins of the Word of Faith teaching/ movement correctly trace it back to the ministry of Kenneth E. Hagin. Brother Hagin was widely known as “the Father of the Word of Faith Movement.”

Critics claim that Hagin was strongly influenced by the writings of E.W. Kenyon. Indeed he was, but only after he had been healed and had ministered on the subject of faith for several years. It was at this later point in his ministry--not at the very beginning--that Brother Hagin merged Kenyon's teachings with his own. Judging Kenyon solely based on his writings, I believe Kenyon to have been a genuine Christian who unfortunately expressed some genuine Bible truths using unbiblical reasoning and terminology. What a tragedy!



It is clear that the teachings of Kenyon--whom Hagin never met--eventually influenced Hagin's later version of his "Faith Message." However, the larger and more interesting story is of the influence in Hagin's life before, during, and for many years after Hagin read Kenyon's books. That influence was his life-long friendship and ministry relationship with the Rev. and Mrs. J.R. Goodwin. I heard Brother Hagin say the following at a minister's meeting I attended:

For the first 40 years of my ministry, whenever God would give me a major vision or revelation, I would not fully teach it and preach it until I had shared it with the Goodwins and asked them to judge it and correct me if they thought I needed it.

Brother Hagin submitted to the Goodwins' instruction and correction for the first 40 years of his ministry. Although Hagin and the Goodwins did not agree on Kenyon's teachings, they did not let this disagreement destroy their friendship. When Brother Hagin came and ministered at the Goodwins' church, which was often, he respected their concerns and taught the faith message without the Kenyonisms. Likewise, when the Goodwins ministered for Brother Hagin, they avoided addressing the teachings of Kenyon. There is a tremendous lesson to be learned from this respectful relationship: you can disagree without being disagreeable, and without demonizing those with whom you disagree.

The influence of the Goodwins on Brother Hagin's ministry dwarfs the influence of Kenyon's writings. The entire story of the Goodwin-Hagin relationship, of which Hagin spoke frequently, is an interesting one indeed. It was preceded by the greatest test and trial of Brother Hagin's life.

Kenneth Hagin was born with a malformed heart and several debilitating blood conditions. He was weak throughout his early childhood and eventually became bedridden around the age of 16 and was given up by his doctors to slowly die. According to his testimony, he had hours of lying in bed floating in and out of awareness with nothing to do, so he began reading what he referred to as his "Grandma's Methodist Bible." He either died or had some near-death experiences in which he drew close to the fires of Hell. Shocked into concern over the condition of his soul, he fervently repented and invited Christ into his heart.

Even though he had by now been gloriously born-again, he was never the less still bedridden. As he continued reading through the bible, he eventually came across Mark 11:23 and 24:

"For truly I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."

As the Holy Spirit drove home to Hagin's heart the truth of the instructions Christ gave in those passages of Scripture, he received a deep revelation on the operation of faith.

Among other things, he realized that faith would work for "whosoever," not just preachers or those with some special spiritual capacity. He saw that he had to believe in his heart—in his inner man, in his spirit—and not in his head. He came to understand that faith was not an operation of mind over matter, or even what some would call "positive thinking." Faith had nothing to do with the mind; it was instead a matter of believing with the heart. But he noticed also that in this passage of scripture Christ referred only once to believing, and mentioned three times the action of saying or speaking. From this Hagin concluded that he had to not only believe God's written promises of healing, but he had to also verbally confess those precious promises. Further, he had to not doubt the Word of God. Lastly, he had to believe his prayer for healing had already been answered, praise God for the answer, and act on his faith, even before any tangible results came.

Brother Hagin testified that he put these truths into practice from his reading of Mark 11:23 and 24, and that within minutes, he was completely, miraculously healed.

Before long, after he recovered more of his strength and stamina, he finished school and began pastoring a small nearby community church. Identifying more with the Baptist church than any other group, he spent several years among the Baptists, preaching salvation AND healing by faith in God's Word. Eventually though, with his preaching on healing receiving a cool response from the Baptists, he drifted over among the Pentecostals with whom he could find more fellowship since they too believed in healing.

Opposed to speaking in tongues at first, he came to change his mind as he examined the Pentecostal teaching on the baptism in the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues. He too received the Holy Spirit, spoke in tongues, and began pastoring small Assemblies of God churches in his native East Texas.

Brother Goodwin had heard that there was a former Baptist preacher who also had preached healing that had recently joined the Assemblies of God. In 1938, Brother Hagin met Dad Goodwin. Hagin was pastoring a church in Farmersville, Texas, and Goodwin was pastoring a church in nearby Greenville, Texas. When Hagin and Goodwin met, each made a profound impression on the other. The Goodwins had trained and mentored other ministers and were led to take Brother Hagin under their wing.

Brother Goodwin had already preached for years about receiving from God by faith, but found that Brother Hagin's teachings sharpened and increased his understanding of specific steps in the faith process. Similarly, Brother Hagin had preached and taught about the gifts of the Spirit for a while, but the Goodwins filled in many gaps in his understanding. Thus began a lifelong friendship and collaboration.

Concerning prophetic ministry, Brother Hagin's understanding was influenced first and foremost by what the Scriptures specifically state about this office. But in addition to the Scriptures, Brother Hagin learned a great deal about how to operate in the prophet's office in a balanced way from hearing Brother Goodwin's teaching on the subject, and from observing Sister Goodwin flow prophetically. Relying on the discerning and wisdom of the Goodwins, kept Hagin from going off the deep end in the way that William Branham and others had done.

The Goodwins found a balance in ministry that few others have found:

- Brother Goodwin taught sound doctrine and governed the church.
- The Goodwins flowed in all of the nine Gifts of the Spirit.
- Brother Goodwin oversaw the gifts that flowed through his wife.
- Bible teachings were inspired and confirmed by acts of the Holy Spirit.
- The flowing of the Holy Spirit was kept within Scriptural bounds.
- Questionable manifestations were not accepted.

The Goodwins operated in spiritual gifts in close combination with God's written Word--which is the only sound way it can be done. Although Brother Hagin later compared his understanding of prophetic ministry with Jeannie Wilkerson, and others, his first and greatest influences were the Goodwins.

In the late 1950's or early 1960's, Kenneth Hagin asked the Goodwins to judge a particular vision the Lord gave him. In the vision, the Lord Jesus Christ told Hagin that the Holy Spirit would begin moving in the Catholic church and in the old-line denominational churches. The Lord told him that many would be filled with the Spirit, speak in tongues, and operate in spiritual gifts in these non-Pentecostal churches. Hagin shared this vision with some of the Pentecostal ministers with whom he was close. All rejected the vision. They could not believe that God would or even could move in the old churches.

From the Goodwins Brother Hagin received a completely different reaction. Brother Goodwin said, “It is God. Hang on to that.” And as all genuine words from God always do, this vision came to pass as Hagin and Goodwin both knew it would. It was called the Charismatic Renewal. And the rest is history.

Kenneth Hagin came to trust and love the Goodwins very deeply—as all of us did who knew them well. The Goodwin family loved and respected him in return. Brother Hagin said that in the years when he was ministering as an itinerant minister, he found praying with the Goodwins to be such a refreshing and faith building experience, that he would sometimes drive miles out of his way in order to ask them to pray with him concerning matters in his life and ministry.

At Brother Goodwins' funeral, Hagin stated that J.R. Goodwin had the greatest grasp of Bible knowledge of any man he had ever known, and that anything he and Brother Goodwin agreed on in prayer always came to pass.

Brother Hagin also stated that the Goodwins had the most Spirit-filled church, and the most decent and orderly church he had ever seen. Allow that endorsement to sink into you for a moment. *The most Spirit-filled, and the most decent and orderly church he had ever seen.* Kenneth Hagin had known and ministered in the churches of numerous mightily anointed evangelists, apostles, prophets, and healing evangelists. Out of them all, the anointing and order in the Goodwin's church were the greatest he had ever seen.

Brother Hagin also said to us at the minister’s meeting, “Back when I was itinerating, I always loved ministering for the Goodwins in their church. It was the only church other than my own, where I could walk in and flow in the Spirit immediately—they had prepared their people so well.” And Kenneth Hagin’s wife, Oretha, has written that she admired Mom Goodwin and tried to pattern herself after her example as a pastor’s wife.

This is not to imply that Goodwin and Hagin saw eye to eye on every spiritual subject. They did not. Dr. Charles Goodwin, the Goodwins’ son, told me:

Dad and Hagin were best friends. The glue that held the friendship together was not theological, but was about the operation of the gifts of the Spirit. Dad did not condone Hagin’s acceptance of Kenyon’s writings.

The level of maturity these two men walked in, and the way in which they dealt with their disagreements, is a lesson for us all. They were always respectful of each other’s opinions. Charles told me of a time when Brother Hagin arrived at the Goodwin house with Buddy Harrison. Buddy brought in a stack of Hagin’s books to be offered later at the meeting. As soon as Brother Hagin saw that some of the books were of positions he took that Dad did not agree with, he said, “Now Buddy, take those back out to the car. You know Brother Goodwin doesn’t agree with my position on that subject.”

According to Charles, Dad Goodwin was equally respectful of Kenneth Hagin’s opinions:

When someone confronted Dad with something that Hagin taught that Dad disagreed with, my Dad would respond with something like, ‘Brother Hagin may have missed it a tad on that one.’

Throughout their lives, the Goodwins were very tolerant of the beliefs of those they disagreed with as long as those beliefs were not totally flaky. Towards the end of her life, Mom Goodwin said to me over the phone one time, “Mel honey, you write me very intelligent letters. And I can tell from them that you embrace some things that I do not embrace . . . but, that’s ok.” How well did the Goodwins and Brother Hagin know each other? Mom Goodwin told me:

People ask me “Do you know Kenneth Hagin? And I say, Do I know Kenneth Hagin?” She showed me the back of her hand, and pointing to it said, “I tell them I know Kenneth Hagin like the back of my hand, because I know him in the Spirit!”

Now the Goodwins and the Hagin's are in Heaven, and their work continues on through those that knew them. The Rev. Kenneth Hagin, jr. read an early draft of this article and sent me the following comment:

"You are so correct. Dad and Papa and Mama Goodwin were very close friends. Dad spoke at Papa Goodwin's funeral and in her last years Mama Goodwin was a member of my church and I had the privilege of speaking at her funeral. I am still friends with Charles David [Goodwin--the Goodwins' surviving son] although we do not see each other much any more."



**Kenneth W. Hagin**

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Brother Hagin mentions the Goodwins, among other instances, in his books, "A Fresh Anointing," and "Ministry Gifts." These and other of Kenneth Hagin's materials may be obtained by accessing the Kenneth Hagin Ministries / Rhema website by clicking <http://rhema.org>.

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**Information about Rev. Mel Montgomery, the author of this article, follows on the next page.**

## About the Author

The ministry of author, reformer, revivalist, and broadcaster, Rev. Mel C. Montgomery is the fulfillment of a prophecy given by Sister Goodwin.

She and her late husband, the Rev. J.R. Goodwin, attended meetings held by Smith Wigglesworth in the 1930's. Then the Goodwins mentored Kenneth Hagin, John Osteen, Billye Brim, Elizabeth Pruitt-Sloan, Brother Mel, and other leaders. Kenneth Hagin and Mel Montgomery developed into balanced prophetic ministries under the Goodwins.

Sister Goodwin laid her hands on Mel and prophesied that Mel would have “an anointed ministry, like *some of the men of old*.” Years after Sister Goodwin's passing, the prophecy began to be fulfilled as Mel was appointed Copyright Agent for the Goodwin audios, videos, and books, and people around the world began sending him other rare recordings by “the men of old.”



Mel's message changed as he listened to the recordings of the “men of old” like Howard Carter, Stanley Frodsham, F.F. Bosworth, the Goodwins, and others. Rev. Montgomery now travels everywhere preaching the Cross, the power of Pentecost, and the message of the need for a Charismatic Reformation. He calls for fellow Charismatics and Word of Faith ministers to separate themselves from extreme teachings, unethical ministry practices, and to return to the sound doctrine and integrity exemplified in the rare recordings. These recordings and his writings are available for free at: [www.brothermel.com](http://www.brothermel.com).

Mel's program “Voices of the Faith Giants,” in which he discusses the recordings and the moving of the Holy Spirit with major Charismatic leaders, is broadcast over internet Christian radio and at: <http://brothermel.podbean.com>. His free monthly e-mail newsletter, “The Voice of Reformation” can be subscribed to at [www.brothermel.com/guestbook.aspx](http://www.brothermel.com/guestbook.aspx).

Mel Montgomery serves as the Vice-President for Helping Inspire Ministries (H.I.M). H.I.M.'s vision is to connect with ministers at all stages of development, with a particular focus on reaching out to ministers who are just starting out in ministry. H.I.M. offers legitimate ministry credentials, mentoring, and ministry fellowship. For information about H.I.M. visit <http://brothermel.com/HIM.aspx>